

CORRESPONDENCE

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Food, Famine and the Future

To the Editor, Eugenics Review

SIR,—Does not your review of Darwin's *The Next Million Years*, and also Mr. Shaw's article on the same subject, ignore one of the most perturbing aspects of the problem of population? Must we not pose the question—is any scientific and intentional control of population possible without a degree of compulsion?

The weakness of democracy is that it will seldom agree to measures which are of long-term benefit if those measures involve sacrifices or discomfort; indeed the history-pattern of democratic States shows that sooner or later their politicians, in their lust for power, descend to a policy of "bread and circuses," with all that that phrase implies. This tendency is liable to become more marked, so far as birth control is concerned, by the elimination through virtual suicide of those sections of a population which favour and practice birth control themselves. How, then, can it be hoped that mankind as a whole will ever voluntarily reduce its birth-rate? Those sections of any society which do limit their families will gradually destroy themselves, and the thriftless and feckless will go on breeding *unless they are prevented from doing so*.

The only deliberate endeavour to improve a racial stock in recent times was made by Hitler. He did not attempt to limit the size of the population as a whole, but he did try to limit the growth of what he considered the adverse elements in that population. His policy was deliberately selective, and it was enforced by compulsion.

Unfortunately the Nazi creed, with its cult of cruelty and callousness towards its victims, not only antagonized the rest of the world but also brutalized its own exponents. As a result the good points which it contained are hardly ever admitted, even today.

But if it were possible for a small body of idealistic leaders to impose their will on the rest of the world, by force if necessary, without brutalizing themselves in the process, and thus to secure compulsory limitation of families among the least intelligent portions of *every nation*, coupled with an overall limitation of the total population of the globe—if this were possible, would it not be better than going on as we are, seemingly powerless to prevent the looming threat of starvation and war that gets nearer each succeeding year?

If it be true that mankind will not voluntarily work for its own salvation, then it must be forced to do so unless we are all to perish. And if in order to survive we must give up our idea of the freedom of the individual and revert to a system of autocracy, then let us not be afraid to face up to that issue.

A world government of good men working for the common good, imposing their will by force but doing so without brutality, and remaining untainted by personal ambition—is such an ideal possible or is it just another visionary Utopia with no hope of realization? There seems little prospect of it at present. But there would be some hope of it, perhaps, if men of science would take some active steps towards its achievement instead of uttering Cassandra-like warnings which kings, dictators, governments and peoples consistently ignore.

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To the Editor, Eugenics Review

SIR,—Mr. Shaw's article, which you published in your January number,* will stimulate many to thought on the future; and few will disagree with the author's general arguments and conclusions. But he ends on a gloomy note, for though he wisely says "not less science but more" he describes us as living "in a time of vast uncertainties and perplexities with little guiding light." In fact, is more light available?

The tenor of his article is that beliefs may have to be changed; but (he says) "let us have no more evangelizing. If science dictates a change of beliefs let them be changed in a scientific way." This surely is crucial and I should like to take his arguments a step further.

I am not quite clear precisely in what sense he uses the word "evangelizing," but since the contrast is with scientific methods he perhaps means the changing of ideas by emotional appeal. Now evangelizing in this sense has surely changed ideas very often in human history, and until there is a great change in the average intelligence, education and maturity of the race, it will remain a most efficient method of influencing opinion; examples on an enormous scale exist today. The communication of ideas among the great majority of mankind is surely still a predominantly emotional process; and logic plays a part only among certain specialized groups of individuals, such as some scientists. Therefore to say "no more evangelizing" is a very pious hope.

But it is surely right to apply science to this: not only to study what beliefs need changing but also how to change them; how, in fact, the emotional factors may be understood, altered and controlled. This has been our crying need for generations; its study is still in its infancy. Even those who are practical experts (teachers, demagogues and others) do not seem always very clear

* p. 216.